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The Black Cat

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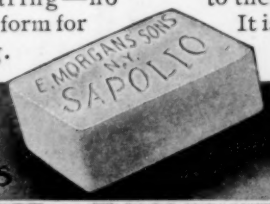

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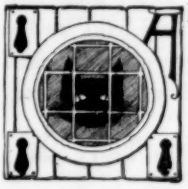
One Sweetly Solemn Thought.*

BY GEORGE SEIBEL.



ALL the sights of the jail had been exhibited in a cumulative sequence. From the hospital, where the latest sanitary frills made tonsilitis a luxury, to murderers' row, where Spike McCoy was speculating upon the tensile properties of hemp, all the glories and the horrors of the institution had been exhibited to the visitors. They had been put into a state of pendulous doubt whether, if circumstances should conspire to rob them of liberty, this were a prison to be sought or shunned, so evenly were the restrictive rigors balanced by a culinary and cubicular benevolence.

"I treat the prisoners as my children," said Warden Shepherd with paternal benignity.

"Spank them when they need it?" suggested the earnest young man who looked like a bank clerk and was a Sunday school superintendent. Lest his interest in the prison be misconstrued, it may be well to add that he was present only as a member of the civic commission's committee on prison reform.

"Spare the slipper and spoil the son," was the warden's sententious reply. "But now that you have seen everything worth seeing, you shall hear something worth hearing."

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At a nod one of his assistants, an undersized Scotchman with a nose that looked like a fine sunset, disappeared down the main corridor. "Try some of these cigars while you wait," the warden continued. "They're the sort we furnish the fellows that are to be hanged, when the last appeal for a reprieve has been denied. Use to serve 'em as soon as sentence was passed, but Blinky Morgan smoked fifty-three dollars' worth and then got pardoned. A year later he was caught breaking into a tobacconist's shop. I always blamed myself for that."

The deputy with the facial sunset returned at this point, followed by a curious assortment of humanity. One burly and ponderous fellow looked like a bleached gorilla. Behind him skulked a cadaverous and thin person with a pair of phosphorescent eyes and carnelian teeth. A little fat man rolled along next like a greasy globule of wiggling dough. Lean men and portly, but mostly lean, tall men and short, hairy and bald, sullen and jovial, meek and tough, senile and infantine — they looked like samples, badly shop-worn, from the last day of creation, experimental Adams tossed aside for scrap.

"Line up, boys," said the warden, beaming from every pore; "line up, boys!"

They lined up. The little Scotchman with the illuminated countenance distributed among them some rolls of paper, grimy and dilapidated. The warden strode forward and waved his hand, and from sixteen throats came the strain:

"I was a wandering sheep,
I did not love the fold;
I did not love my Shepherd's voice,
I would not be controlled.
I was a wayward child,
I did not love my home;
I did not love my Father's voice;
I loved afar to roam."

"You see," said the warden, proudly, when the last stanza had proclaimed how the prisoners had "once preferred to roam," but now loved their Father's voice and doubly loved His home — "you see I believe in the regenerative power of music. How many leaders of church choirs turn pickpocket or forger? There is moral strength in song. Now I do my best to inspire my unfortunate charges with the moral strength they lack. Let's have another, boys! Make those iron gratings rattle." And

they did it with "There is a gate ajar for me," singing as if it were not a symbolic fib:

"Oh, depth of mercy, can it be
That gate was left ajar for me?"

"Seems to me that's rather dangerous doctrine," suggested the newspaper man of the party. "Suppose they took it literally?"

The bank clerk who was also a Sunday school superintendent did not join in the obligato laugh that followed this. "Who is that lanky one with the deep bass voice?" he inquired.

"Hasn't he got the wonderful voice!" exclaimed the warden, gleefully. "Hasn't he got *the* voice? I told him if I had such a voice I wouldn't hold men up on the bridge at night. No, sir, *I'd* go into grand opera, which pays better and is legal. Say, Walters, let's have a little solo."

Walters, one of the least forbidding of the sixteen, stepped forward. "I'm a bit hoarse," he said; "there's a draught in my cell."

"How about that?" angrily inquired the warden of the deputy with the ruby promontory. "Do you think I want it said that a man lost his voice here?"

While the Scotchman was apologizing and explaining, Walters began to sing:

"One sweetly, solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er;
I'm nearer home to-day, to-day,
Than I have been before."

"A great voice," asseverated the Sunday school superintendent, forgetting the reluctant accents of the paying teller in his enthusiasm. "And you say he's here for a hold-up?"

"An attempt," was the reply. "He'll very soon leave us. He got only six months. They're too easy. We haven't anybody else that can sing like that. Enough for to-day, boys. Back to their cells, Douglas. To-morrow we'll begin to rehearse 'Bringing in the Sheaves.'"

They ambled, waddled and slouched out. The air seemed easier to breathe. The committee rose to leave.

"I can give that fellow a chance if he gets out soon," said the bank clerk. "We need a basso in our church choir. He would be a great acquisition. Nobody need know where we got him."

"It's often occurred to me," assented the warden, "that I might supply a good many churches with choir talent of a high order. But I've always thought what a temptation the contribution box would be to the men, and so I never pushed it."

Assuring the warden that the contribution box at Saint Zebedee's was surrounded with all the safeguards which the timid faith of untrustful trustees could suggest, Lorimer secured the warden's promise that Walters should be sent to him on his release. And so it came about that a few weeks later the fashionable congregation of Saint Zebedee's sat up with a start to listen to a new voice in the choir. It was a voice that had a soul behind it, and it spoke to the souls in the pews. It could reach down to the depths of sin and repentance, and could ring like the trump of judgment, and could jubilate like a seraph on fire with holiness. People came to hear this wondrous voice, and it made them weep, and the coins in the contribution box became larger, which is an infallible index of spiritual growth.

People wondered, but no one seemed to know whence the singer had come or who he was. Lorimer had recommended him, and the music committee had engaged him at once on hearing him sing. He was satisfied with the salary, and it was raised soon, and all seemed harmony.

"He looks as if he had met with a great sorrow or loss," observed the contralto, one day. "He is so pale and haunted-like, and there is a kind of a yearning light in his eyes." So the legend was born that the wonderful bass voice had been heard in grand opera, and that a tragic love had pierced the soul behind the voice, showing it the vanity of worldly glitter, and the richer beauty of Zion's tents. Before Walters had sung in the choir at Saint Zebedee's three months, he was the hero of a whole mythology. He went on singing with his trumpet-like voice, serenely unconscious of it all, and the yearning look in his eyes deepened day by day.

Then one Sabbath the soul-winning voice was not heard. No one knew what had become of the singer. The music committee inquired of Lorimer, but Lorimer had no idea of why he had left or whither he had gone. The landlady of his boarding-house was equally ignorant. He always kept paid up; he had sent for his clothes; he hadn't left any address. Lorimer made sure the contribution of the previous Sunday had reached the treasurer in safety, and then his righteous indignation over the cold ingratitude of man led him to call up the jail.

"After all I did for him," Lorimer told the warden, "I consider it a shabby trick to leave like this without a word. He might at least have told me if the salary wasn't satisfactory. We'd have raised it two hundred a year, instead of engaging another Bible woman in Bombay."

Warden Shepherd, at the other end of the telephone, hemmed and hawed a few times. "You don't miss anything?" he asked.

"Not a thing."

"Silver communion set and the rest of the props all safe?"

"Oh, yes, he hasn't taken anything, or done anything. The only thing that hurts me is the way he left without a word of warning. I don't think that was nice."

"Certainly not, but I wouldn't worry about it. You don't know the circumstances. He may have had, doubtless did have, a good reason for leaving."

"Well, couldn't he tell it to me? I was entitled to that much consideration. He didn't even leave his address."

"Well, I wouldn't worry about him."

"I hadn't thought of worrying, but maybe I should. I may have been wronging him. He may have been murdered or kidnapped."

"Oh, no — nothing of the sort."

"I'm not so sure about that, anyway I'm going to notify the police."

"I wouldn't if I were you — don't break in, Douglas — hold the line a minute, Mr. Lorimer."

The irate Mr. Lorimer, who had not been mollified in the least

by the cool way in which the warden took the news of the basso's base ingratitude, kept his ear glued to the receiver. Then he started as if stung, for a voice he knew floated across:

"One sweetly solemn thought,
Comes to me o'er and o'er;
I'm nearer home to-day, to-day,
Than I have been before."

"Is that you, Walters?" shouted Lorimer with bulging eyes.

"Don't you know my voice?"

"But how — why — ?"

"Same as before — holding up a fellow."

"But, Walters, I'm shocked and grieved. I thought you were truly repentant and reformed. I thought — "

"So I was — so I am. It ain't that. You don't understand."

"Understand what?"

"Well, the trouble started when the chorister put us on the hymn of 'The Ninety and Nine.' I had been homesick before, but when I sang about the 'ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold,' it was too much. I felt that I was the lost sheep, 'away from the tender Shepherd's care.' I felt that I had to get back."

"And you committed crime — ?"

"Oh, I came here first and asked him to take me as I was. He would have done it, maybe, but Douglas — the fellow who treats his nose like a meerchaum pipe," this in an undertone — "Douglas kicked. So Mr. Shepherd says to me, 'Jack, we need you here. The jail choir has been on the bum,' or some such words, 'ever since you left. I don't blame you,' says he, 'for wanting to get away from that refrigerating plant they call a church. I'll be looking for you,' says he, 'and the old cell will be ready. Hurry and get back, and we'll sing 'The Ninety and Nine' here next Sunday. That's how I got back."

"And you committed a crime — ?"

"I wouldn't call it a crime — and I want to say right now that the responsibility for most of the hold-ups rests on the people that are held up. They're so confoundedly obliging that I believe if you gave them your name they'd remember you in their wills. The reason so many people stick to crime is because they're encouraged and can't get out of it. It took me three

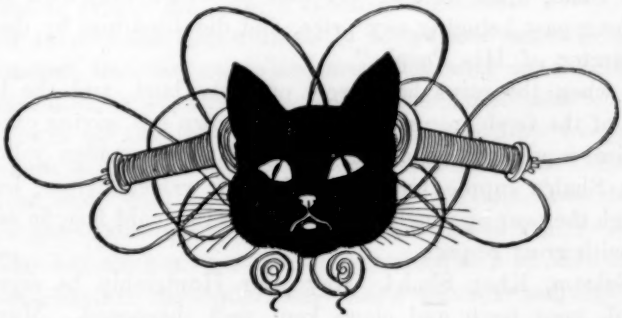
days and I had acquired three hundred dollars before I could get myself arrested. But here I am at last."

"Well, I hope you'll be happy!"

"Happy? You just bet I am. So's the warden. Wait, hold on; don't hang up the receiver yet — listen to this:

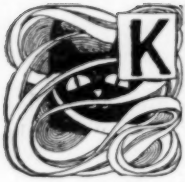
"But all through the mountains thunder-riv'n,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heav'n,
'Rejoice, I have found my sheep!'
And the angels echoed around the throne,
'Rejoice, for the Lord brings back his own.'"

"Good-by!" shouted the bank clerk who was also a Sunday school superintendent. And the answer floated back, "God be with you till we meet again."



The Protector of His People.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.



HAN SHAH was a good tiger, highly respected in the neighborhood. Do not be surprised at this, because there are both good and bad tigers, though, as with human beings, the reputation of the daring criminal is likely to occupy more news space than the virtuous law-abiding citizen. Hence Khan Shah was unknown to the world at large, but almost deified by the villagers within range of his labor.

It was Khan Shah who preserved the crops from spoliation by killing off the deer and wild hogs, and he it was who drove away a suspicious-looking vagrant of his own tribe; but never, under any circumstances, had he been known to harm man, child, or tame beast. Therefore, the villagers built a little altar to Khan Shah, upon festival occasions presented him with an old cow long past bringing any price, and dignified him by the title "Protector of His People."

So when the rains had swept over the land, and the bright green of the fresh crop rose above the brown soil, giving excellent promise, a villager, catching a glimpse of the golden yellow of Khan Shah's supple form, with its soft velvet stripes, leaping through the near-by jungle in chase of deer or wild hog, he saluted him with great respect.

"*Salaam,* Khan Shah! May your Huntership be ever successful, your teeth and claws kept well sharpened. May you always guard the crops of this people."

Indeed, in the pride and strength of his full perfection, Khan Shah was a tiger to be admired. The great head hung upon his massive shoulders, with its black rosettes and the delicate silver threads of whiskers, was purely majestic. In every movement of his long agile body, ending in the wide sweeps of his sinuous

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black-ringed tail, was grace above adverse comment. Khan Shah, standing in a shaft of golden sunlight against a background of emerald foliage, was an object to stay the real hunter's finger on the trigger of his rifle.

But gradually the burnished yellow of Khan Shah's body began to fade into a tawny shade, the velvet stripes took on almost a rusty hue, a gray tint appeared upon his muzzle, and his head swung lower in a stride which did not have the easy motion as of yore. Somehow, too, Khan Shah began to fail in his spring upon the deer and wild hogs, and the crops suffered in consequence.

Not that the villagers lost faith in Khan Shah quickly. They said that his spirit was gone hunting in other grounds, and must be brought back to his proper duty. So they made offerings and burned incense before his shrine, while, Khan Shah, lying not so very far off, licked his paws over the discovery that his claws had grown blunt, that his joints were stiff, therefore, it was hard for him to catch the deer and wild hogs. Moreover, he was becoming lean on that account, and some other way must be found to satisfy his natural appetite.

Some persons hold that animals do not possess reasoning power or sentiment, that they are guided merely by what we call instinct. Perhaps, then, it was instinct which moved Khan Shah to cast a hungry eye on the fat goats in the White Sahib's compound, instead of the lean cattle of his own people, and had nothing whatever to do with a tiger's conscience. In any case, the fat goats began to disappear, and the White Sahib took notice.

"Who is stealing my goats?" he demanded of his native butler.

"Sir," replied the butler, who knew the real culprit, "the police have been informed of this matter, and say that it is a thief from another district. In future the Sahib's goats will be locked up at night."

If Khan Shah was to be convicted on the charge of goat stealing, assuredly the evidence would not be forthcoming from his own people.

With the White Sahib's goats cut off from his food supply, Khan Shah roamed further afield and killed a bullock, the property of a village some ten miles away. Also, in that same village,

a man was dragged forth from his hut, without sound, in the dead of night, being heard of no more, and the people rose up and called upon their White Sahib to see into the matter. That White Sahib found *pugs* (tiger's footprints) in the dust, held a council of the headmen, and laid the crime pretty fairly on the right striped shoulders. So he wrote to the other White Sahib, and said: "I think your tiger is up to mischief. You had better look out for him. If he comes here again, he'll be shot."

The White Sahib of Khan Shah's village recollected his missing goats, and knew that the hour was near at hand when he must deal with Khan Shah. But by the law of Khan Shah's people not without proof, lest in their eyes a great crime be committed. Was Khan Shah not the Protector of His People, the reincarnation of an animal god, and cursed be he who would deal a death blow upon that sacred hide. As yet, you see, there was no proof of guilt; even then only an outcaste White Sahib could presume to be the executioner. So the White Sahib took down his rifle, carefully tested the mechanism, and filled the magazine with cartridges. Then he waited for the news he knew would come sooner or later. But it did not descend quite so shortly as he expected, for nothing was heard of Khan Shah during several weeks. Khan Shah was hiding his face from the sight of men, and his people wondered.

Now it happened that the White Sahib's house was set on the side of a hill, and from the veranda, beyond the slope of lawn, a belt of rock and scrub jungle fell down to the brink of a tank, or small lake. At evening, it was the custom of the young village girls to resort to the lake, and with much mirthful splashing perform their ablutions. The White Sahib, sitting on his veranda, was pleased when these sounds reached his ears, for they meant that all was running smoothly in the village.

It was so on one particular evening, the sun sinking in crimson splendor toward the baked earth, and at some distance a haze of blue smoke rising above the thatched roofs of the village, proclaiming that cooking pots were on the fire. A peal of merry laughter from the bathing girls caused the White Sahib to come out of a reverie and turn his head downward toward the lake.

But it was not the group of bathing girls that suddenly concentrated his gaze. His glance had lit upon a slowly moving yellow object, creeping stealthily in and out among the rocks, with a course set obviously toward the bathing girls. For a moment the yellow object came into full view, swinging its head backward as if to make sure of a retreat.

The White Sahib rose quickly, and went in for his rifle — Khan Shah's hour having come in his evidently murderous design upon the bathing girls. There was not much time to lose, for Khan Shah was within a few leaps of the lake; but the White Sahib judged from experience that Khan Shah would proceed cautiously in this his first assault in the open. He would probably wait until one of the girls came out of the water, and then seize his helpless victim. So the White Sahib made an equally cautious detour among the rocks, with the intention of cutting in between Khan Shah and the bathing girls, whose actions and voices proclaimed complete innocence of danger. But something caused Khan Shah to change his purpose; in fact, gaining scent of the White Sahib, to take up his trail, creeping in his footsteps. Thus the hunter became the hunted, with the White Sahib beginning to wonder what on earth had become of Khan Shah, who ought to have been where he clearly was not. Little did the White Sahib imagine how more than once he was almost within Khan Shah's claw grip, and that for the most part Khan Shah's red gleaming eyes were full upon him. In this way they trailed each other among the rocks, when the White Sahib was moved to turn back on his course.

A cavernous growl from the top of a rock not more than three paces distant, and a foot or two above his head, caused the White Sahib to look up with a start. Crouching low was Khan Shah, with every savage instinct kindled into immediate action.

The White Sahib understood something of the ways of tigers, and, therefore, to attempt retreat would be suicide. He flung himself down under cover of the rock, as Khan Shah's huge body swept over — a streak of faded yellow with rusty black bands. A great roar vibrated among the rocks as Khan Shah bounded to earth, but even then the White Sahib knew better than to shoot. Resting on one knee, with his rifle to the shoulder,

the White Sahib waited for Khan Shah to present a vital spot. As Khan Shah wheeled in savage rage in having missed his mark, a little spurt of flame shot from the barrel of the White Sahib's rifle, and that which went with it found a lodging in Khan Shah's brain. But that was not quite the end of Khan Shah.

Presumably, the people of the village heaped praise and honor on the White Sahib's head for having saved their daughters from the jaws of Khan Shah. Not at all. Instead they called him a murderer in their hearts, and secretly sent up a petition for his removal. They held that no crime had been proved against Khan Shah, and that he was the Protector of His People from deer and wild hogs. Even so he is still such, for in the gray of early morning does not his spirit hover on the outskirts of their fields, and is not the food set down before his shrine always eaten? The White Sahib, of course, does not believe these things; but then who is the White Sahib in India? A few hundred years ago he was not there, a few hundred years hence, perchance, Khan Shah will be honored when he is forgotten. Like him, others have come and gone, but India remains the same forever.

A Romance of Old Monterey.*

BY SHERMAN KIMBALL.

MY business, which is connected with the fishing industry, often takes me to Monterey. By degrees the quaint old town has taken a grip upon my affections which I feel each repeated visit but makes the stronger. When first you see Monterey, you feel a desire to shake it and make it wake up. The loungers in the sun, the antiquated cars, and the dusty ranch wagons all seem to have been there since the beginning of time. It is as though the retreating wave of Mexican domination left a pool of Latin customs and habits of life in the midst of a fast growing and populous country.

Where else in Northern California do you find the old adobe buildings with their plaster-covered earthen bricks and their balconies jutting over the street? The Custom House of Monterey, where the first California flag was raised, the "Sherman Rose," with its romantic memories of the great general who stayed awhile but never returned, the rambling ruin, whose wooden clapboards speak of the Maine woods from whence they came by way of the Horn, — are all poignant suggestions of a distinctive and charming history.

Did I say the town seemed asleep? Aye, perhaps, but only I think does it take a siesta. The early days of Monterey were full of stirring deeds, and now the dreams of that time are brought before one, and the mind is filled with the glory that has been. Some day, perhaps, — who knows? — the old town may take its place as one of the thriving and up-to-date cities of California.

There is in Monterey an old adobe house now fast falling away to its original elements. To the rear of the house is a large courtyard, evidently a garden in former times. Along the street side runs an adobe wall with its coping of faded red tiles. This wall

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is high enough so that, to one walking or driving in the street, it is impossible to see what there may be on the other side. Just the waving tips of fruit trees appear and the rest is left to the imagination.

Even an ordinary wall has always appealed to me as an invitation to find out what there may be on the other side, but a wall without a gate or a door and just too high to see over is absolutely irresistible. After withstanding the temptation as long as possible, I finally made inquiries from a friend of mine at the post office.

"Oh, that is the old Valazquez place," he replied. "No one lives there now; but I understand that the property is held in trust for some young heirs now in Europe. I believe that an old servant of the former owner works over at the '17 Mile Stable.' If you are interested in knowing something about the place you might look him up."

After diligent search, I found an old Mexican half-breed, who was employed as a hostler at the stable my friend had mentioned.

Later that evening, over more than one bottle of "Dago Red," the following tale was told me. As I am unable to put into words the queer *patois* of a Mexican half-breed, I will do the best I can to tell you the story in plain English.

"Years ago, when I was a young and active *vaquero,*" the old Mexican began, "my master, *Señor* Valazquez, owned many *varas* of ground and many herds of bullocks. Away to the south over that pine-covered line of hills, off towards what you call 'The Sur,' lay my master's *ranchos.* I was his range-boss, and my love for him was greater than that I have felt for any one before or since. For a long time we lived on one of the *ranchos,* and our cattle thrived and increased as the days lengthened into years. Once or twice a year we slaughtered part of our cattle, and, after drying the hides, carted them down here where they were loaded into ships to become leather and shoes in some other country.

"As Monterey, before long, became a great place, my master spent more time here and left the *ranchos* to me. One time, when I came down to give my report and receive orders, I heard that a most beautiful young *señorita* had come with her father and mother to live in Monterey, where her father had business interests. In

those days there were many dashing and handsome cavaliers; but the beautiful *señoritas* were very few. So it happened that this young lady became very popular, and many a young *caballero* would have given a great deal for a small favor. Among them all there were two who received the most in the way of favors: a young Gringo (American) army officer and my master. *Señor* Smith was the Gringo's name, and he was a captain of infantry. Bah, why should one go afoot in those days? But, nevertheless, he was the handsomest man I have ever seen. My master was not handsome; no, not even good-looking, but there was that in him that made us all love him, oh, yes, a very great deal.

"Before long it was plain that our *señorita* cared much more for my master than she did for the captain, in spite of his gold braid and brass buttons; but her father, who for long had known that the Gringoes had come to stay, frowned on my master, and said that he should not see his daughter. They lived in that house with the wall, and her father built that wall, only then it was covered with broken glass and long sharp spikes. His commands were that the *señorita* should go out of his house only to the extent of the walled garden. Thus she must keep confined until she consented to marry the captain.

"One day my master sent for me, and when I had come he said, 'Rodriguez, will you help me to win that which I care for most in the whole wide world?' You may be sure I left no doubt in his mind but that I would gladly give my life for him if he needed it. Then he told me that he was resolved to win the *señorita* for his wife, and would go about it in this way: On the side of the garden wall, farthest from the house, there were many boxes and boards in uneven piles, which had lain for a long time waiting to be hauled away. I was instructed to wait for three nights, until the moon should rise very late. Then I was to take pick and shovel and make a cut in the wall.

"When the time came I went to the point where the boxes and boards were piled, and after marking a place two feet wide by four high, I set to work to cut through the wall. The bricks were so hard that I had to use an axe, and even then I made such slow time I had to leave the work but half done. The loose dirt

I put in the empty boxes and the boards I arranged against the wall so that nothing could be seen of the work that had been done. Also my time was short, for I could only work late and before the moon rose.

"The second night I made progress to the extent of leaving but a shell of the inside wall, and then I told my master that I had done as he had ordered. He had in some way sent word to the *señorita,* and I was told to be on hand the next night but one, and to have three horses saddled and ready for a ride to our good friend the *padre* at the Carmel Mission further down the coast.

"The night came and the appointed hour was one o'clock. For an hour before the time we crouched in the lumber pile. Finally, at a sign from my master, I cut through the rest of the wall and we were free to enter.

"Inside everything was very dark. I could just see the tree tops against the sky, but under foot all was black. Led by the tinkling sound of a little fountain that bubbled ahead of us, we crawled into the middle of the garden. The only other sound was the croaking of the frogs in the basin, and as soon as they heard us they became silent. In a few minutes there was a movement in the direction of the house, and soon we seemed to feel the approach of another. My master gave the cry of the ground owl, and in a minute I heard him speak to the *señorita,* who indeed it was.

"My master gave me a tug at my sleeve and began to move cautiously in the direction of the opening. As we went along, I put out my hand to steady myself and touched a tall pile of flower pots. I tried to catch them, but too late. Over they went, crashing through some panes of glass which were used for sheltering little plants.

"We jumped for the opening, but, in the pitchy black and hurry, lost our way, and were like rats in a trap, running here and there. In three minutes my master and I were bound and taken before the *señorita's* father.

"To be brief, the *señorita* was told that her lover's fate rested with her. Would she agree to marry the captain in two days' time? Then her lover might go free — after the wedding. Did

she refuse? Well, my master might have five minutes in which to say his prayers.

"My master begged her to refuse, and offered her father all his possessions if he would not force the *señorita* to marry a man she did not love. Finally, the *señorita* promised to meet her father's wishes, and was led away. We were put in a room under the roof of the house, from which there was no escape.

"The next day the house was filled with preparations for the wedding, and I will not describe to you the way my poor master felt. Truly, if he had a weapon, I think that he would have killed himself.

"We were fed enough and kindly treated. Again, the next day, there was even more excitement and bustle downstairs. That night was to be the wedding night. The thought of my master's torture, and of all the trouble I had caused him, though he never mentioned it, gave me many hours of bitterness. Finally, a servant came to us, and, after casting loose our feet, took us to the *señor,* who had speeded all the wedding guests, and was waiting to tell us of our fate.

"In a very courtly way he received us, and after he had cut the bonds from our hands, invited my master to share his hospitality. For the first time I saw my master completely cowed. He could not speak, and signed that he would go. The *señor* told him that he was sorry that things must be as they were; but that he had acted as he thought he should for the welfare of his daughter. He said that times were changing in California, that the Spaniard and the Mexican must go, that a new people were coming who would supplant them, and who would develop the country as they had never done. While he honored my master, and admired his brave actions, he had determined that his daughter should marry an American, and grow up as one of the new people."

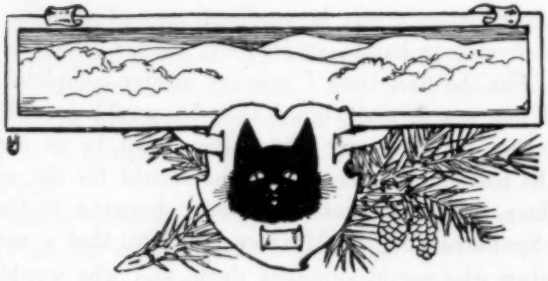
Here my story-teller stopped, and seemed to be lost in thought for so long a time that I asked him if that was all of the story.

"No," he said, "but the rest is uneventful. The American captain died two years later, in Arizona, from some kind of fever. His wife returned to Monterey, where in a short time her father died, and she was left all alone in the big house. Later, my

master married her, and their children, a son and a daughter, are now with relatives in Spain."

As I walked back to my hotel, the old wall took on a new interest in the moonlight; but now I do not wish to see over the wall. The inside will always be for me the setting to a romance, which was long delayed but at last fulfilled. I can hear the croaking of the frogs and see the tops of the trees waving just a little against the lighter darkness of the sky.

Monterey, City of Romance, will you always lie dreaming of the days that are gone? The same surf breaks at your feet, the same pine-clad hills encircle you; but the Romance of the Future calls you and you must awake to the knock of Opportunity.



The Higher Law.*

BY CLARENCE R. NAFF.

THE long black steamer poked her prow warily through the gray fog, as she rounded Tillamook Head and swung southward. The west coast evening chill had already sent nearly the last shrouded, shivering passenger from the decks. On the forward main deck remained only two men, each clad in a long mackintosh and steamer cap, leaning on the rail, gazing downward at the foaming crest that hung and hissed across the bow. Beneath the visor of one man's cap the light of a cigar brightened intermittently. Presently the other man fumbled inside his coat.

"Have you a match, sir?" he asked the other.

The man addressed took a silver match-safe from his pocket and held it open towards the speaker.

"Thank you." The flaming match shot down into the foam, and another glow gleamed and darkened steadily in the gloomy twilight.

"Pardon me again," the man who had spoken first broke the silence. "Are you acquainted in 'Frisco?"

"Yes," replied the other, "that is my home."

"Perhaps you know something about the courts there?"

"Yes, I have practised law there twelve years."

"Indeed! Then I'll explain my intrusion. I have a case coming up on demurrer on the tenth, in one of the superior courts, which will be my first appearance in the California courts."

"You are from Portland?"

"Yes, I have offices there. I was drawn into this case at the eleventh hour; but I hope to clean it up soon. Do you know, on principle, I hate to demur, unless the suit seems unjust or frivolous."

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"Oh, I don't know. One's clients are entitled to their technical rights as well as their actual rights. I have a case we have been fighting on motions for a year. I told the other attorneys one day that I would do this much for them: If they got a judgment it would be a sound one."

The two men laughed together, then smoked in silence for a time. A short piece of plank rose and tossed on the foam beneath.

"Do you remember," asked the Portland attorney, "the case the juniors in law school used to discuss? Two men were shipwrecked and cast adrift upon a small raft sufficient to support only one of them. After struggling for a while, it became evident that one must be sacrificed or both would be lost. Finally one deliberately struck the other from the raft, and thus saved his own life. Under common law, what was the degree of homicide?"

"That's a new one to me," said the San Francisco attorney, "I guess because I studied law in an office. What is the answer?"

"Well, it was a moot question. I am not sure in my own opinion yet. What do you think?"

"Why, it seems plainly excusable homicide."

"How so? He was not advancing justice or preventing crime."

"Self-defense."

"He was not attacked."

"The right of self-defense is founded upon necessity, which certainly existed in this case, and was not brought about by the defendant."

"Is not the slayer bound to desist when his victim is helpless?"

"But he was not harmless. He was still a menace."

"Not intentionally or criminally."

"I don't think that governs in such a case."

"The right of self-defense does not include the right of attack."

"It was not criminal attack; he was doing a lawful act."

"So was the other man. And no man has a right above another to kill where both stand equal."

"Is it not a fundamental principle of law that a man may protect his life at all events?"

"The principle applies only where he is placed at disadvantage by another's malice or misdoing."

"You are wrong, my friend, you are wrong. Any man, — any being, may protect his life. All law, all life is based upon that principle."

"I think you are wrong. I think that man was guilty of murder."

"Murder? Great God, man!"

"Yes, murder. If a man, even a man starving on the desert, were to meet another with food, and should kill him and take his food away, you would say he was guilty of murder, would you not?"

"Yes. Under the law the food belongs to its owner, and no one has a right to take it away. It would be a felony to do so, and killing while committing another felony is murder."

"Doesn't a man's life belong to him? How can you take it away, lawfully, unless he has forfeited his right by his own act?"

"A man's right to live is above all. It is the law of nature — self-preservation — the highest law."

The two men stood sometime in silence, leaning against the rail, listening to the swish, swash, swish on the bow below.

At last the Portland attorney spoke. "Perhaps you are right."

* * * * * * *

The San Francisco attorney leaped from his berth, half choked by the thick smoke that filled his stateroom. Staggering about he groped wildly for the door, striking the knob several times before he grasped it and threw the door open. A scorching, stinging blast almost threw him back into the room. Leaping out into the blinding, burning torrent, he rushed madly towards the deck. Gasping and choking, stumbling and striking, he fell against the rail before he knew he was outside the cabin. The whole ship forward was enveloped in smoke, and the deck was already warping and cracking with the heat. The thunderous roar of the fire told of its terrible hold. A moment he clung to the rail in irresolute desperation; then, burned and stifled, he flung himself over the rail far out into the black, boiling mass below. He struck the water head first, and shot deep down into the cooling sea. It seemed a soft, soothing refuge from that cruel,

murderous fire. But there was a deathly chill in its touch, a deadly determination in its grasp.

He rose quickly to the surface. The hulk of the burning steamer had swung shoreward from him in a desperate effort to gain the beach before those insatiable flames could complete their terrible work. The stern of the vessel was still clear, and the attorney could see a crowd of people huddled together on the upper deck. The engines were still working, but before the steamer had gone twice its length there was a dull roar, and she swung around broadside to the waves, and rolled helplessly in toward the shore, a blazing, roaring, seething mass.

A huge swell rose over the attorney's head and bore him down deep under its ponderous wave. As he rose behind it, his shoulder struck something hard, which he instinctively grasped. It was a life belt! Here was aid, hope, life, in his hands. But as he rested upon it, it sunk in the waves, and across its submerging lines rose the drawn, streaming face of his companion of the deck — the Portland attorney. They had seen each other on the ship before, and the recognition was mutual. Neither man spoke, but from their eyes poured out to each other the silent supplication of one who has passed beyond his power. Together they sank, clinging to their despair; together they rose, clutching their hope.

"Can you swim?" gasped the San Francisco attorney, as they rested a moment between waves.

"No," gulped the Portland attorney, struggling, helplessly.

"Neither can I. Tread water. Your feet — fast — "

As they rose behind a huge swell, they held themselves a few moments by frantic treading. Again the silent, yearning appeal went out to each other's eyes — the call of the lost to its kind.

"It won't — hold — us both," cried the San Francisco attorney.

The Portland attorney did not reply. His face was drawn and set with desperation and despair.

Again they rose, gasping and choking, clutching and struggling. Their eyes sought each other, eagerly, as they held themselves up again for a moment.

"Have you a family?" gasped the San Francisco attorney.

"No," came gurgling through the foam.

"Neither have I. No one to mourn when we go."

Then the towering, relentless wave fell, crushing the two men down into its boiling depths.

From the crest of a low swell the shore line was dim and distant. It was plainly impossible for the two men, already almost exhausted, to keep afloat until carried ashore by the waves. When the eyes met again the look of appeal had gone, and in its place was only terror and despair. They turned from each other and looked with pitiful, lone despair at the harsh, cold, curling waves, then at the clear blue sky above, bright with the morning glow.

Another heavy swell rolled over them and bore them down, still clinging to the helpless belt. From the eager, snapping waves the San Francisco attorney raised his right arm. Whether or not it was to grasp the whirling belt no one will ever know. The Portland attorney saw the move, and shrank back into the water, a look of mingled terror and resignation drawn deep on his pallid face.

"Strike," he cried. "Strike! It is your right — it is the law."

Again they sank, struggling, under the wave; again they rose, struggling, in its desolate path. The eyes of the San Francisco attorney were set with a look that burned in the brain of the Portland attorney to the end of his days. Through it shone the determination, the power, the pathos, of a man's supreme effort. The drawn face sank behind the tossing belt. The voice through the hurling spray was weak and tense.

"There is a higher law. It is not nature — earth. I guess — it is — just — man to man."

A tremendous wave rose over the two men, dashing its spray down upon their half sunken heads. It caught the life-belt with an angry grasp, almost tearing it from the Portland attorney's hands. He clutched it, madly, in the whirling wave. It came easily to his arms. It bore him lightly to the top of the wave. Hope bounded within him. Life thrilled in his veins. But in his heart was a terrible dread. Rising on the buoyant belt, he dashed the spray from his eyes and looked about him. There was only the waste of a broken wave, and the dark, still, silent depths beneath.

The Lost Dog.*

BY ARTHUR T. QUESTROM.

I HUNG idly over the tramp freighter's rail on the side toward Puerto Barrios, and stared at the forsaken little town — a wretched cluster of thatched huts, for the most part, under a few stunted palms. The captain had gone ashore to settle up his business with the officers of the Guatemala Transportation Company; the crew had scattered in the town, all but the man on deck-watch, who was busily whittling a boat out of a chip of mahogany. I, the passenger, the one avowed pleasure seeker on the *Chincora,* alone was bored to extinction.

Through the hot, lazy, moist, summer sunshine, a man came sauntering toward me down the long pier—a "dead-beat" by every token — also, to my trained, medical eye, a "rummy" past all common hope of redemption. His face was so swollen, so battered — his eyes so bleared under the still fine forehead and fair hair — his complexion so pimpled and revolting that it took all my experience of odds and ends of humanity to know him for a young man, with a year or two to the good before his thirties. He slouched as near me as the pier allowed, and accosted me, huskily:

"For the love of Heaven, man, give me a drink! Champagne — native stuff — anything — but a drink or the price of one — damn it! I must have it!"

For all its degradation, his voice wholly lacked the professional whine. I had a feeling that this was almost, if not actually, the first time he had begged. He stood facing me with horribly appealing eyes.

"See here," I temporized, "even if I weren't a doctor, I'd have the sense to see that in the state you're in, and on such a day, it wouldn't take many drinks to put you beyond the power

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to ask for one. Come aboard and let's have a look at you."

He came shuffling over the gang-plank, hang-dog and hopeless in every inch; but still with that element of unfamiliarity with the situation that made me willing to do my best for him, to try, at the least, to ward off the thirst until the safer, cooler night-time. Suddenly he spoke up:

"If you're no good for a drink, have you a piano?"

Under the carelessness of his tone, I caught a hint of urgency.

"Sure," I answered, "an old rattletrap the Captain says he took at Belize, two or three trips ago, for a bad debt."

"It'll do," he insisted. "Let me at it!"

So I led him down out of the glare into the dark, stuffy cabin. He didn't wait to sit down at the instrument — just laid his hands on it as he stood and began to strike chords. I pushed the stool up behind him, and he hauled it into place with his foot, running his fingers over the keys all the time for dear life — then sat down and really started in. I'm no musician, but I've heard most of the good music going, and well played at that — and I never heard better playing than there in the gloomy, old cabin of the *Chincora* — airs from all the operas I'd ever heard, Chopin, Beethoven, queer, out-of-the-way fantasies I'd never run across before, or since, for that matter — and clear out of the chaos again and again, blending into the rest and rising supreme out of them, the clean, pure strength of the "Pilgrim Chorus." Heavens! the soul the man threw into that thing! And the old, tuneless piano, with a note gone here and there, just sang it for him like another soul answering his.

"Once more with joy, oh, my dear home, I greet thee!"

Over and over again from the maddest medleys of "Wang" and Handel's "Largo" and coon songs he came back to it.

At the end of some three hours his hands dropped suddenly from the keyboard.

"I'm tired," he said. "You don't sail till the tide turns. Haven't you a corner where I could turn in and rest?"

As it happened a spare bunk in my own stateroom was empty, and I took him there, rags, dirt and all, and told him to sleep it off. After a couple of hours I went to rouse him. It was getting

on to sailing-time, and I wanted a word with him before we left.

As he lay there asleep the boy in him looked out through the mess he had made of himself in a way that touched my pity; but even while I stared down, he opened his eyes, and in an instant woke to full recollection. A peculiarly sweet, whimsical smile flashed across his face.

"Thanks, doctor, I haven't had such a treat in years. It beats the kind I tried to ask you for all to blazes!"

"Then the trouble's over?"

"Yes, for now," he answered, "the demon's kicked under by the sheer power of song. Queer, isn't it? But I'm grateful — gratefuller still if the reform 'll hold good till I can beat it over to Belize and my next quarter's money."

"Next quarter's? then you're —"

"You've hit it. I'm one of those poor devils of remittance men. Look here, you've treated me square. I'll tell you the truth, though you're under no obligation to believe it. Fact is, belief would be quite too much of a favor to ask. But — I'm the eldest son of a lord, back home. Oh, you needn't bother to hide the grin. I'll not tell you the name. That's the family's secret, not mine. They couldn't help my turning out black sheep. I was the whitest kind of a lamb till I struck Oxford, then I went wild. Remembering the history of some of my grandpapas on the maternal side, whom I much resemble, I'm inclined myself to say that I 'reverted'—but the folks at home wouldn't stand for that."

"But even so," I objected, "why this extreme degree of down and out?"

"Why, because, don't you see, I've a decent younger brother, a good, square chap — a regular Den — I mean, a regular chip of my father's block. He's just out of Oxford, now, and, I fancy, as clean as they make 'em. He's the sort to do the name credit — and to have kids worth putting on the family tree. Oh, the only thing for a plunk like me was to clear out and keep out! I draw my remittance every quarter — and it's big enough to live on like a gentleman, if I choose — and, incidentally, if I could keep my fingers on it more than four or five days all told. I'm out of the world, you understand, gone out — and pretty soon I'll be genteelly killed shooting big game in South America. Great stuff,

that 'big game!' And Gerald 'll come into the title and the estate, and all will be smooth sailing for the family honor. I tell you — " the levity suddenly dropped from him, and he met my eyes squarely, " the best thing a fellow who's got where I am can do, if he has a name and a standard to hold up in the world, is to hide, hide, *hide,* and crawl out of the back door of life as speedily as possible, and leave the job to those who can do it better. Good heavens! I haven't orated so since I was an undergraduate! "

He stretched himself and lounged out into the cabin. There was a newspaper on the table, and he picked it up, idly.

" The London *Gazette!* I haven't seen it in two years — or wanted to. Behold the power of song! "

He ran his eyes carelessly over it, page by page. Suddenly I saw him galvanized into attention. I heard his breath come fast. He bent closer and read the item again — and still more slowly again. Then he drew himself surprisingly erect and faced me a moment. Instinctively I knew that I myself was on trial. As if satisfied, he spoke out sharply, and with a new clip to his tone.

" I'm going home — *home* — and I need your help. I believe — I know that I can trust you. Read this, please."

He thrust the paper into my hands with his dirty, nerve-shaken fingers. I skimmed the brief announcement of the marriage of one Gerald, son of an English peer, of a name renowned for generations, and a certain Rosie Ripley, a chorus girl. The tone of the paragraph was hardly complimentary to the future lord. There was a covert allusion to his wildness that could not be ignored; and the reference to the bride was not over-respectfully phrased.

As I looked up from it to my ragged tramp, he brought his foot sharply down on the cabin floor.

" Rosie Rip! " he growled, " Rosie! The confounded, young idiot! He might at least have had some originality. Whatever I am now, I did escape marrying Rosie — though through no fault of hers. Fancy that ballet girl, with a dozen years' 'past' behind her, that worn-out bit of stage finery as a future peeress — and mother of some of *us.* Not while I live to step in between!

" Doctor," he went on, again meeting my eyes, squarely, and

again with a trace of that rare, whimsical smile, "I'm going to climb back into life. I'm a poor hulk, but, thank God! I've the grace to know it, and to plan my world accordingly. If Gerald and I are both to revert to type, then confound the type! It's time to start a new one. I know the man who can set me straight — a doctor at home. He told me he could any time — if I honestly cared enough; but I never did till now. Will you see me through to Belize?"

Perhaps I was Quixotic — for I had no proofs — and this all might be only a dirty scheme; but I yielded, eagerly, to a belief in him for what he called himself, and from sheer trust in the fellow, stood surety with the captain for his transportation to Belize. There, true enough, he found his remittance, and was quick to pay his debt and book his passage home.

And that is all the story, except that when in about two years the old peer died, the Honorable Gerald, with his chorus-girl wife, did not succeed to the title. It was not so very long ago, either, and yesterday it came back, vividly, when I saw in the London *Gazette* the account of a certain wedding among the ranks of the nobility. Both bride and groom, I noticed, were mentioned in terms of the sincerest respect.

A Ringing Scandal.*

BY KEENE ABBOTT.

OTHING like it had ever before startled the smug and commonplace tranquillity of the little Western town; the fire bell was proclaiming a scandal. Clangorously it rang, and in every street tumult arose: noise of wheels, roar of wagons, barking and howling of dogs, galloping of hoofs, a running over board walks. Helter-skelter, higgledy-piggledy, everybody was coming. The city marshal arrived, then the fire-chief in his helmet, then the sheriff on his horse, — people from all parts of town. Quickly assembling about the timbered bell-tower, they stood astonished at what they saw.

Passionately the laundryman, Sing Hong, gripped the long rope, his body leaping and falling, his loose blue shirt, his wide sleeves, and his capacious trousers swelling with the wind until he looked like a balloon about to soar away. Alternately the white felt soles of his black shoes hit the ground and bounded up; and, uncoiling from the crown of his head, down glided his thick strand of braided hair, which went snapping about like the long lash of a whip.

Presently the busy bellman was seized by the sheriff, and as the wild, deep-toned, brazen voice at the tower's top went swooning into silence, the laundryman was energetically questioned. People squeezed themselves in about him, eager and curious, oppressively curious. And when it was ascertained that this was a false alarm, that Sing Hong had actually been ringing the fire bell for private reasons, it began to look as though the little Chinese had invented for himself a very sad case of yellow peril. Men did not like to be haled away from their business, and the volunteer fire department felt that its dignity had been much abused.

With some indecorum of speech and loudness of voice, Sheriff Gregg demanded an explanation.

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"Weh I tay you," panted Mr. Hong, with perspiring eagerness, his butter-hued face having turned to a glowing bronze by force of strenuous exertions. "I getta rob by man nem Unc Tom Cab."

"How's that?" questioned Sheriff Gregg. "A man named Uncle Tom's Cabin?"

"Oh, no; I tay you. Harry Wilson nem is. Was actor in Unc Tom Cab gone bloke."

"Was an actor in a stranded Uncle Tom's Cabin Company — that it? — Say, there, you fellows, quit your crowdin'!"

The perspiring laundryman solemnly added:

"I ling dissa fi' bell to hev him allest — glab him into clothous."

"Courthouse?"

"Yeh, clothouse. I lak hev him allest, an' mek collec' hones' debt, an' mek shatisfaction faw dissa troubles, an' teach him not be climinal no maw."

The mood of the crowd had changed. Smiles appeared; there were chuckles and sly winks; men began to nudge each other with elbow and thumb, and they closed in more and more tightly about the little Chinese.

"How did he rob you?" the sheriff sternly inquired.

"By no pay hones' debt. Petty soon he going ketch tlain an' hop on."

"How do you know?"

"Me, I fonnow him to laiload station."

In their eagerness to hear every syllable of Sing Hong's explanation, people were pressing in so uncomfortably about him and so often interrupting his recital with derisive comments that presently Sheriff Gregg, the fire chief and a few others retired with the culprit to the law office of Judge Hill, where the inquiry could be pursued without further annoyance from elbowing spectators.

When the door was securely shut against the joyously jeering rabble, the sheriff said:

"That Wilson fellow owed you some money, did he?"

"Two dolla an' quar' owe me. Three week I cly collect dissa money. Come to him in hotel. He stan' talk begedder wif hotel kepper. Say 'What is?' I tay him: 'Please giva me kunder-

ness to pay dissa litty hones' debt. Long tem wait; no *can* no maw.' "

" Well?" said the sheriff.

" Weh, I come again nex' day. Dessa tem he shek han'. Say: ' Ve'y gnad mek acquaintance. Fink I was shee you befo' somma tem. Face sheem familiarizez.' I smi'; I sabby joke, an' he ask ' How is health?' Nen he say: ' Exceeding regret no can pay.' "

" Then what?" the fire chief inquired.

" Nex' day, come again. Tay him he mak plomise; I lak he kep plomise. Weh, he put han' in pocket, fee' fo' money, nen look ve'y disappointment. Say: ' Excuse. No gotta money naw, *but* — mebbe so got money tomawla. I mus' come,' he say, 'to his loom,' he say, 'in hotel tomawla.' "

" And you went?" asked the fire chief.

" Yeh, I am coming to his loom, an lock on daw, ve'y poliness." Joe illustrated by knocking with dainty touch upon a panel of Judge Hill's disorderly desk. " Litty while wait, nen daw ope-up by petty fat neddy."

" Door was opened by Fat Neddy? Who's that?" asked the fire chief.

And the sheriff said:

" Lady? Do you mean lady?"

" Yeh, petty fat neddy wif go' earlings hang down."

" A pretty fat lady with gold earrings," the sheriff repeated. " All right. Go ahead."

" She was smi' ve'y nice, an' nen tek off earling. Say: ' Please tek earling on account debt fo' wash.' Ol light; dat mekka me shatisfaction, but I no get earling. Faw why? Weh, becos dissa Unc Tom he come 'long. Say: ' What is?' an' she tay him, ' No gotta money.' Nen he fee' ve'y despise on me, mek mucha loud convisition an' walk ol roun' loom on ve'y loud feetsteps."

" You mean, he went stamping about the room," the sheriff observed, his gray moustache twitching in time to an almost imperceptible smile.

" Yeh," said Joe, " and he loared at me."

" Snored at you?"

" No, loar — *loar* lak wil' beas', lak lion."

" Swore like a lion?"

"No, no, no — he *loar* at me! Mekka noise, ve'y big noise way down his stomach."

With pretense of great surprise, the sheriff said:

"Oh, roared at you!"

"Yeh, low —lowed at me ve'y mad. Tay me: 'Go 'way; *gee — tout*; no lak hanging roun'!' But fat neddy say: 'Please doan mind him; please comes nudder tem. I sure pay hones' debt.' Nen suddenity she glet sick an' faw down on bed. Befo' I walks out I shee dissa Unc Tom glet ve'y sympafy wif dissa de-ah wife. She hang on his neck, ol semma litty girl, an' cly, an' kep gloaning an' gloaning lek me'y hell."

"Like what?"

"Lak *merry* hell, mebbeso mucha worse. Weh, I tay myse'f: 'Mebbe dissa petty fat neddy tly mek big fool me, but ol semma, she look lak nice, hones', fat neddy.'"

At this point the hearing was interrupted by Tom Munger, the constable, who offered a few scraps of information bearing indirectly upon the case. The wife of Harry Wilson (frequently mentioned by Sing Hong), had, it appeared, been indeed very ill. Through the kind offices of the Rev. Dr. Lund, so the constable averred, she and her husband were permitted to remove their trunks from the hotel. Their account, it was said, had been settled by the clergyman, and the woman had then been taken into his family, where she was to remain for an indefinite period. Meanwhile her husband was to have a place in a thriving theatrical organization, a repertoire company playing in small towns.

Had Sing Hong previously known these facts he might not have been deterred, even then, from pursuing his unfortunate creditor to the railway station.

"Fred he going to hop tlain," he declared, "fred he disappearing about dousand miles off. Shee him befront laiload station an' tay him he *got* pay. He say: 'No can.' I say: 'Gotta — *gotta* pay instamenty!' Again dis mekka him ve'y despise wif me. He getta mad, get desplate. Suddenity glab me by neck an' colla, givva me big shek-up, ol semma dog shek lat."

"Shook you like a dog shakes a rat?" the sheriff repeated,

for the benefit of those who could not easily understand the laundryman.

"Yeh, awfu' bad shek-up; fink mebbeso shek whole dam top head off!"

"And what did *you* do?"

"I go 'way from him. He mek me tire, mekka me disgussion, mekka me *ve'y mucha* disgussion. I lep back, nen lun down sleet, lun fas', lun so fas' I lose ol my breffs. Go glab bell-loap, an' bull, an' bull, an' kip on bull till mos' exhaus', — bull jesso fas' I can!"

"He's got his facts right, I reckon," the sheriff observed, as he spat reflectively but inaccurately into the shadow of an iron cuspidor. Then, turning to his associate officers, he said, complacently: "It was quite a chore, as near as you can make out, for Joe to ring the bell like that. Think he ought to be locked up?"

The sheriff's face was becomingly stern as he asked the question, but since the fire chief was having a coughing fit at that particular moment, and since the town marshall, the constable and even Judge Hill himself were all looking determinedly out into the street, the prisoner was now released, with solemn admonitions never to ring the fire bell again.

Joe, immediately afterward, went away down the street, went ruefully away with slow, dejected step, and yet he still had spirit enough to bow courteously to the Rev. Dr. Lund whom he met as he was about to enter the laundry.

"Goo' day, Doc Lun'," was Sing Hong's greeting to that dignified gentleman of the cloth. "Walks in. Be seat. Tek chair."

"Joe," the visitor began, when he and the Celestial had entered a room with broad, white ironing tables. "I am directed to pay you two dollars and a quarter from Mrs. Wilson. She is sorry to have kept you waiting so long, but really it couldn't be helped. She has been very ill."

"Sick?" the Chinese politely inquired.

"Yes."

"How is?"

"Much better, thank you. And the baby . . . thank heaven, the baby *is* going to live, after all."

"Baby come? What?" the laundryman asked with mild surprise.

"Yes, Joe."

"An' going live?"

The clergyman slowly nodded, but did not speak, and for a time the two men sat looking at each other.

"Nice!" Joe exclaimed, and by and by he was quietly adding, "Awfu' nice to hev litty baby." Then, after another long interval of reflection, as he sat with elbows upon the ironing table and face between his palms, he said, rather wistfully: "One tem I am fadder; hev nice litty boy."

Again he was silent, and at the end of a long pause, he slowly added:

"He die."

Presently the laundryman arose, and pushing back a shabby green curtain which protected a shelf from the dust, he deliberately took down a long rectangular parcel wrapped in an age-yellowed and brittle newspaper which broke in many places as he took it off. Within lay something swathed thick with pieces of dun-colored cloth, and when these were unfolded, an oblong box was revealed, a sweet-odored little box of carven sandalwood.

Gently raising the lid, Sing Hong brought forth some delicate silken things, which, with fondling deliberation, he spread out upon the clean, white-covered ironing-table. One was a wee, lilac-hued tunic edged about with a narrow margin of old rose silk. A very dainty garment it was, fancifully embroidered with silver thread; and equally exquisite was a pale coverlet of lavender and gold, which was such a revelation of soft hues that one might have thought it a fabric woven of nothing but summer sunshine and butterflies and mothers' dreams.

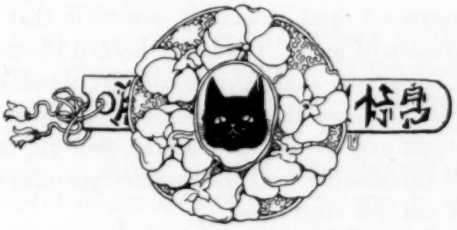
"I lak," said the laundryman. "I lak *her* going to have dissa clo. Nice to covva up litty boy."

Delicately refolding the coverlet, he deftly wrapped it about with rice paper, and then put the tiny parcel into the hands of Dr. Lund, but did so with extreme care, as though it might be something of fragile beauty, easily broken, instead of a mere piece of silken needlecraft.

In putting the little tunic away, Sing Hong was not nearly

so unerring in his deftness as he had been. His hands, it seemed, had grown suddenly very awkward, as slowly and musefully he refolded the wee, dainty garment. He smoothed his fingers over it, touched it lingeringly, caressingly, and with rare deliberation replaced it within its fragrant house of carven sandalwood. Then, as he wearily got up, he twice cleared his voice as if he wanted to say something, but it was only when he had safely put the box away in its place behind the faded, shabby curtain that he said, very quietly:

"Dat was awfu' nice, sweet, *de-ah* litty boy."



The Queen Mias.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

WILL tell you the story of Peter Schultze, and you can think as you will. Perhaps you will believe, perhaps not."

Reinhardt, after making this comment, slipped back into the sagging canvas of the big deck chair which he had built out of unplaned pine boards. His long meerschaum came up out of the depths, and the glowing eye of the freshly filled pipe seemed to be the only thing alive in the silent night.

The hut, with its nipa-palm covering, was hemmed in by the jungle. Around it, aggressive and defiant, stood rows upon rows of masoi, ebonywood, and pandanus, sentinels that appeared to resent the intrusion of man. The heavy-headed plume grass in the smell cleared space was shaken curiously by wandering puffs of air that had roamed over the leagues of jungle that lay between the lonely outpost and the China Sea, and over all, tangible, fear-inspiring, and threatening, was the mystery peculiar to the places that man has not yet conquered.

"Yes, I will tell you of Peter Schultze," continued Reinhardt, his heavy bass booming out into the stillness of the tropical night. "It is only a little story, and you might like it. I have never told it before, never. But perhaps you are sleepy?"

"No, go ahead with the yarn," I cried. "The silence round here won't let me sleep."

The rough-fashioned chair creaked as the naturalist settled himself, there was an interval of silence in which the jungle appeared to me as a huge sprawling animal that waited weirdly expectant, then Reinhardt commenced.

"It is five years since Peter Schultze came out here," he said. "Mother o' me! How time flies! I just reckoned it up. He

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came with the mail that told me of the death of my boy Phillip, and Phillip is now dead five years and three months. It took three months for that letter to find its way from Rotterdam to this outlandish spot.

"Peter Schultze was a fine man. He was a naturalist to his finger tips, and the world was small to him. People thought they had traveled some till they heard Peter Schultze speak. He knew the rim of the earth better than I know the track to the Dyak village. He had camped with the Kuku-kukus in Papua, spoke the Yap dialect like a native, and had a nodding acquaintance with every little atoll between Penang and the outer Marquesas.

"Peter Schultze was some traveler. He did not hunt around for the common things that I chase. *Mein Gott!* No! He wanted things that no other man had ever got, and that is just why there is a story about Peter Schultze. If he was like me or like any one else that is satisfied, there would be nothing to tell, but — Well, you will see.

"Peter Schultz lived with me right here in this bungalow. He sat with me out here on the veranda in the evenings, and he told me of places where he had been and of things he had seen. The Malay Archipelago was a mighty small place to him. He had seen wonderful things and had gone through much, but of all the wonderful things he had seen, he was to see something more wonderful right here. For this Borneo is a place of wonders. This — "

The German stopped abruptly. Out of the plume grass which surrounded the veranda, came a soft thudding noise as if a heavy animal were hopping along with difficulty. We listened intently. The sound moved across the grass into the jungle beyond, and was lost to our ears.

"And there," said Reinhardt, "is a curious thing. I, who have been trapping in this spot for eight years, do not know what made that sound. It is an animal, but I have never seen it. *Nein!* I have heard it before, and I have puzzled my head over it. Now if Peter Schultze were here he would not stop till he had found out what kind of an animal it is. He would start out to-night, and everything else would be forgotten. That was the

trouble with him. Curiosity? *Ach!* Yes! It was the worst kind of curiosity.

"He was here — let me see — three or four months when the Dyaks came to him with a story. They had begun to understand the failing of Peter Schultze, and they knew that he wanted unusual things. So they told him of something that is unusual. They told him of the Queen Mias that has been a legend in Borneo since the time when Lorenzo de Gomez discovered the island.

"She is supposed to be the mother of all the ourang outangs, and the Dyaks are more afraid of her than of anything I know. She is black, so they say, stands higher than the tallest Kyan, and is more fierce than a Bengal tigress. When she comes down out of the hills the Dyaks move in front of her like frightened cattle. She chases the hill men till they drop with fright, and the old people and the weaklings are not seen any more.

"Well, that is what they told Peter Schultze, and you can bet it interested him. He could not talk of anything else. All day long the Dyaks came to him with stories, and they brought down the hill men who had seen the thing.

"'What do you think of it, Reinhardt?' he asked me.

"'Tales,' I said. 'There is no such thing. The Dyaks are liars!'

"But Peter Schultze could not rest. The Queen Mias was something new to him, and the more stories he heard about her the more anxious he was to go up into the hills.

"'I am going, Adolph,' he said to me one day. 'I could not rest now without testing their stories.'

"'Go,' I snapped. 'You are a fool to listen to their yarns.'

"'But, Adolph, if she is such a size?' he said.

"'Bah!' I cried, 'there is no such thing.'

"But you could not advise Peter Schultze once he had made up his mind that there was something uncommon within reach of him, so he started to outfit himself for the trip. He was deaf to all my talk. Every day some of the niggers would come in with a new story about that thing in the hills, and Schultze was as excited as a ten-year-old boy.

"'Come with me, Reinhardt,' he said. 'Come on, man.'

"I think the stories must have affected me just then. You

know what I did? Of course! I went with Schultze. Yes. Forty Dyaks and the two of us. *Mein Gott!* We marched out straight across there where you see that white star hanging low in the sky, and I don't know which was the sanest of us, Peter Schultze or I.

"Sometimes in my sleep I go over that trip again. It is so. I dream of it, and I wake up perspiring with terror. I will dream of it to-night just because I speak of it to you now. It is always like that.

"Well, we started out, the two of us white men and the forty Dyaks, and away in front of us over the hills, where no one had ever been, was the something that Peter Schultze wanted. It is the devil to want anything very badly.

"You do not know Borneo. I do not know it, and I have trapped here for eight years. But I began to feel it after we had passed over the hills. Yes, I began to feel it mighty hard. It is alive! Mother o' me! yes! It touches one with cold fingers! *Jah!*

"Schultze did not feel it — well, he did not feel it as I did. He was thinking of that Queen Mias, and he could not notice anything much. But I noticed, and the Dyaks noticed. We were going into a place that looked as if it would not let us go back out of it. It had a snaky feeling that made me almost sick. You have seen animals that are not what nature intended them to be? Well, that place was like that. It had been so long by itself that the trees and the creepers had become alive and formed an alliance against man.

"Do you know what it is to be in a place where you do not like to make a sound? You do? Then you understand what it is like behind those mountains. We were near a presence. I do not wonder any more about the Greeks who found gods and dryads in their groves. Only there are no dryads in Borneo. There are devils there.

"We were twelve days marching, and that feeling getting worse every day, when something happened. Two of the Dyaks disappeared in the night. Peter Schultze heard the news with a laugh.

"'They've run,' he said.

"'No,' said the chief, 'they have not run. One of them has a son with us, and he would not run away from his son.'

"'Well, I don't care what has happened to him,' snapped Schultze. 'Let us go on. We're miles away from the Black Swamp.'

"It was in the Black Swamp that the hill tribes reckoned the Queen Mias always stayed, and Peter Schultze thought only of getting there. When I spoke to him about the disappearance of the Dyaks a little while after, he had forgotten all about it. You can understand the kind of man he was. The Dyaks were nothing to him, but the Queen Mias — Wait, and I will tell you.

"That night another man disappeared, and another on the following night. But Peter Schultze didn't mind a little bit then. We were now on the edge of the Black Swamp, and the tales which he had heard about that monster she ourang outang had nearly turned his brain. He would not listen when I tried to point out to him that the disappearance of the men was something that I could not explain. He did not care if the whole mob disappeared as long as he got what he wanted.

"And that Black Swamp was a thousand times worse than the country we had traveled over. *Gott!* Yes! It was the devil of a place. I dream of it always. When the trees rubbed together it was like the whisper of spirits. The big, thick, wet creepers that blocked out the light, plaited themselves over everything like snakes, and besides all that, there was a smell. It was such a smell as I had never sniffed before and do not wish to sniff again. And it is peculiar that the smell of that place comes to me in my dreams. Did you ever hear of any one dreaming a smell? Well, I do.

"I asked Balon — he is down at the village now, and he whispered his answer. 'The Queen Mias,' he said, and every time he mentioned the name after that, he made peculiar signs with his hands and feet. You can guess how cheerful it was in that swamp. The place was nearly dark. We talked in whispers. The creepers tore the clothes off our backs, and then there was that smell that I would give a hundred marks to know what caused it. And hardly a night passed by without the disap-

pearance of a Dyak. That was the most devilish thing. They went, and they left no trace.

"We came to a place that was just a shivering morass where one had to grip the creepers on the trees to prevent his feet from disappearing in the green mud, and the Dyaks got mighty afraid there. I didn't wonder. The place had me frightened just as much as they were, but I would not admit it because of Peter Schultze. You cannot picture that place from what I tell you of it. It is impossible! It was hell! It gripped us with invisible fingers. It choked us, *Jah*! Something — something that we could feel, and see, and breathe, and hear, was freezing our marrow bones.

"That night every one of the Dyaks broke and ran. Something stampeded them. I do not know what it was. I have a memory of that night, but I am afraid to put that memory into words. Perhaps my eyes played tricks with me — I do not know. But they stampeded, screeching and yelling like madmen, and they left me with my teeth chattering, trying to make Petter Schultze run after them.

"I am not afraid to tell you that I was a coward then. My knees had no power in them. My jaws clicked together like the bones of a colored minstrel. 'Come on!' I cried. 'Come on, or they will lose us.'

"'Like Hell!' snapped Peter Schultze. 'You're not a nigger, Reinhardt!' Then he blazed away with his Winchester at something that was running over the bed of creepers above our heads, and when he went crashing in the direction that the thing had gone, I followed like a madman. I know I will dream of it tonight. I am sure of it.

"I don't know how far I followed Peter Schultze or how many times he blazed away at the thing that was traveling over our heads on the network of snaky creepers. It is curious that I, of all men, should have lost my head like that. The jungle has no terrors for me. Night does not alarm me. You know that. I have lived and trapped up and down Borneo for many years, and most of the time I have lived alone. That is the reason I wonder much why I raced so madly after Peter Schultze through that morass, and why I was afraid of the place and terrified lest

he might leave me by myself to face the thing. It puzzles me.

"There are animals, as you know, that feel danger in the air. The monkey feels the presence of the snake when she cannot see him, or smell him, or hear him. It was so with me then. All I heard was a noise that might have been made by a big mias swinging himself along through the branches, but a million little nerves in my body told me that it was not an ourang outang. And those little nerves know something. At times they tell us more than our eyes and ears together. They are just what is left to us of the animal instinct, and they possess the knowledge that was accumulated by ten thousand ancestors. *Jah!* It is so.

"That is why I ran after Peter Schultze who was blazing away at the noise that seemed to be always above our heads. Do you know what I felt then? It was a curious feeling. I felt as if I was near something that had lived years and years after the rest of his species had become extinct. It turned me sick. It was the little nerves that brought me that knowledge.

"As I ran, my mind was filled with thoughts of the glyptodon, and the plesiosaurus, and the dinotherium, and it was my instinct, not my knowledge, that brought those thoughts. I know that. My book knowledge was at sea. I could feel that through every little pore of my body, but my instinct — Well, my instinct told me that I was not fitted to fight the thing that was crashing through the lianas overhead, and my legs wanted to go in the opposite direction to the one in which Peter Schultze was running.

"I screamed out to Schultze to tell him that I would go no farther, but he did not hear me. He could listen to nothing only the noise of the thing he was chasing. He was a madman just then. I could hear him in front of me, splashing through the slime-covered water and blazing away with his rifle, and just because I loved him I made my legs run in the same direction when they wanted to run away.

"We ran like that for hours. It seemed years, but I knew afterwards from what the Dyaks told me that it was only a matter of three or four hours. And all the time we were running, that noise was somewhere near us. Now it seemed close, and again it seemed far away, and there was the smell that I told you of. I never sniffed anything like that smell. It appeared

to be an odor that belonged to the time when the earth was young. It was not of our time. No!

"Then, suddenly, the noise stopped. I could not hear Peter Schultze, nor could I hear the noise made by the thing crashing through the creepers. And the silence that followed the noises frightened me much worse than the sounds. It was devilish. It crept over the place like a blanket, and it made me sick.

"I called out to Schultze — I screamed out to him again and again, and when I got no answer I turned and ran as fast as I could in the opposite direction to which that infernal thing appeared to be going. Fear had me like a vise at that moment. I could not think.

"I was covered in green slime from the swamp; I was nearly naked because the thorny creepers had torn all the clothes from my back, and I was insane with the horror caused by the disappearance of Peter Schultze, and the terror brought by the noises and the smell. Never have I been like that.

"Sometimes I sit here of an evening and wonder over it all, and I call myself a coward, then I laugh. *Gott!* Yes! I know that I am not a coward, and I know that if it happened again I would run just as I ran on that night. I feel that now, and some days have passed since the time I saw that swamp.

"I ran until I dropped. I could not stop running. And it was by good luck that Balon and a few other Dyaks who were fighting their way out of that hell-hole, found me when I dropped, and half carried me back to this place. I think that my senses did not return to me till I was inside this bungalow. I am sure they did not."

"And Schultze?" I stammered, as the German finished speaking. "What became of him? Did you see him again?"

The naturalist tapped the heavy bowl of his big meerschaum against the side of his chair, and the taps went out into the night like pellets of sound. "I have not finished telling you of Peter," he said, quietly. "He stays in the story."

"Then he came back?" I cried.

"*Jah!* He came back. But it was quite a time after that night in the Black Swamp. It was — how long do you think?"

"How can I tell?" I spluttered. "How long was it?" The

recital of the story seemed to have brought a peculiar quality into the night. The silence, the sentinel trees, the furtive puffs of air, now carried a challenge — a menace, which I had not previously detected.

The German took up his story like a man pledged to perform a disagreeable task.

"It was seventeen months after that night," he continued. "Yes, seventeen months. I was standing there at the end of the bungalow, and a noise in that big ebonywood made me look up. I saw two eyes watching me from the branches, and I stared at them. I stared a long time, then I cried out: 'God in heaven! It is Peter Schultze!' And it was! Yes! Peter Schultze! But it was only by the color of his eyes that I knew him. It is so.

"He climbed down out of the tree and came towards me, and then I knew that something was wrong. He looked at me like a man that is trying to remember, and the look made me cry. He had forgotten me. Yes! He was like a big child, and I led him in here by the hand. He sat down, and I tried to speak to him, and then I saw that a great fear was upon him. He was afraid of something. He clung on to me like a baby and followed me round from room to room, saying nothing, but looking behind him all the time as if he expected something to spring out of the jungle and rush the bungalow.

"And that was Peter Schultze who was not afraid of anything, and who asked me if I was a nigger when I wanted him to turn back on the night we raced across the Black Swamp!

"The Dyaks from the village came up and looked at him, too, but he did not know them. I don't know whether he saw them even. He seemed to be looking through them at the jungle when they stood in front of him, and they went away shaking their heads. They knew that something terrible had fallen upon Peter Schultze.

"All he could do was to follow me around and watch the trees. He made me creepy. Sometimes he would think that he saw something, and he would upset things in his hurry to get under cover. It was not nice for me. *Ach!* No! This place is lonely enough without any one playing stunts like that. But he would not speak. Not a word. He would eat and watch. Yes, he

would watch plenty. Sometimes of a morning I would leave him here on the veranda of the hut watching the trees, and I would find him there in exactly the same place when I came back at night after I had spent the day in the jungle.

"That went on for ten days, and on the night of the tenth day something happened. Peter Schultze slept in the little room where I keep my specimens now. It was a sleeping-room then, but I have changed it for some reasons. It was about midnight when I heard one tremendous scream, and I sprang up from the bed and reached for my revolver. It was Peter Schultze that had screamed.

"A big moon was dodging in and out of some clouds over there to the east, and when I rushed through the little passageway between my room and the one in which Schultze was sleeping, I ran into him and knocked him backwards. While he was getting to his feet he roared out to me.

"'Quick!' he yelled. 'Give me my rifle, Reinhardt! Quick!'

"It was the first time he had spoken since the day he came back, and I knew by his voice that he had come to his senses.

"'Hurry!' he screamed, and then he made a grab at the revolver in my hands, wrenched it away from me and dashed back towards the little room.

"I stumbled after him, and as I ran, fear gripped me again by the throat. Do you know why? Because the smell that I sniffed in the Black Swamp was in this bungalow, and it made my knees shake and my teeth chatter when I smelt it.

"'Schultze!' I roared. 'Stop! Peter! Stop!'

"But Peter Schultze was himself again. He sprang through the little netting door, and I stumbled after him. The big moon lurched behind a cloud at the minute that Schultze fired the revolver, and all I saw was something black at the window. Yes, that window that is just behind you. I could not tell what it was. I cannot tell you now. I only know that the thing was there, and I knew that the smell that was so strong in the room was turning me sick. *Ach!* Yes! It was the devil of a smell. It gripped my throat and it filled my mind with thoughts of the mastodon and the big creatures that were abroad when this old world was not as well known as it is to-day.

"Schultze fired again and again, and then the thing that was hanging to the outside of the window screamed loudly and sprang back. I have never heard a scream like that. A mias? No! I have trapped threescore ourang outangs, and I never heard one scream like that.

"'The door!' yelled Peter Schultze, and I rushed after him through my bedroom to the door of the bungalow. The moon slipped out from a cloudbank as if it wanted to look, and Schultze emptied the revolver at the black shape that was plunging through the plume grass. I pushed the rifle into his hands, and he ran to the edge of the jungle and blazed away, while I called to him to come inside.

"He did come in at last, and he barred the door after him. Then he stood looking at me for a moment as if he were trying to recall my face.

"'What is your name?' he said.

"'Adolph Reinhardt,' I answered.

"'And what is mine?' he asked.

"'Peter Schultze,' I replied.

"He said the name over to himself three or four times, and then he smiled like a boy who has found the missing piece of a picture puzzle.

"'And I came from Rotterdam?' he said.

"'That is so,' I murmured.

"'And I have a wife, I think?' he stammered. 'And I have a boy?' And he looked at me hard when he said it.

"'Of course you have,' I cried. 'Your wife's name is Katrine, and your boy is called Peter. He was named after you.'

"Then a miracle happened to Peter Schultze. Yes! A miracle. The mind that God had given him seemed to get its balance when I mentioned the name of his wife Katrine. It was so. He dropped the rifle on the floor, and gripped my hands.

"'How long was I away?' he screamed. 'How long? Tell me?'

"'Seventeen months, Peter,' I said.

"'Seventeen months!' he shrieked, then he started to pull on his boots and dress himself as if he were doing it for a wager.

"'Where are you going?' I asked him.

"'Home!' he shrieked. 'Rotterdam! Home to Katrine!'

"'But not to-night?' I said.

"'*Jah!* To-night!' roared Peter Schultze. 'I am going to the village to get Balon to row me down the river, and I will get down to Sarawak and get a passage to Singapore. Why shouldn't I start to-night? I have been long enough away.'"

Reinhardt stopped again. The peculiar thudding sound that he had commented upon earlier in the night passed again through the plume grass and died away in the packed tree masses on the other side of the tiny clearing.

"And what did he tell you?" I asked. "What did he tell you about the seventeen months that he was away?"

"He told me nothing," said Reinhardt quietly. "I put three or four questions to him as we walked down to the Dyak village, but he did not answer. He did not want to answer. I do not know why. How should I? He had some reason, that I know.

"Six months after, I got a letter from him from Rotterdam, and he told me that I should come home and live the rest of my days in peace. And his wife, Katrine, that I knew when she was a little girl, she sent me her regards. But I could not go back. I love the silence, and I love my work. Come, we will go to bed. The night is old."

Cash on Delivery Courtship.*

BY HALLBOWLIN ELMES.

OW are you going to tote your A No. 1 very best girl to dinner, with a theatre party to follow — swellest seats on the bill of fare and first-class house, — and wind up with a supper at one of the way-up places, nice table off in a corner all by your two little lonesomes, where the waiter gets the high sign to merge into the perspective while you hand her out the old, old line of goods that she takes as a dead surprise, though she knew it was coming right along, — most likely had a bet up about it and only wondered how you managed to coast so long with your brakes set; — how are you going to float a proposition like this, running into not a nickel less than twenty plunks, when your available assets are four cents?

Emmet Payne was up against a condition, not a theory, and all he had to comfort him was the old man's advice about setting a course and keeping to it.

"If an earthquake tears the ground from under your feet or a cyclone blows you into the ocean, that is only an incident. Plug right on, never be a quitter!"

Great line of talk, eh? Well, this wasn't exactly an earthquake, though Emmet's seismic instinct told him things were due to undulate a bit when he caught up with the room-mate who had absorbed, — that is the correct financial term, — absorbed all his wad, and vanished into the ether that afternoon. And Emmet was out of a job, too! The question now was what to do about it.

At six he was due to meet Miriam, the one and only, the queen of all the Miriams that ever, at Brooklyn Bridge and take her uptown. He had doped it all out to pop the fateful ques-

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tion that very night. With four cents net, and no job! And Miriam's people were wealthy, her uncle was a director or something on the subway and had so much money he was an invalid most of the year, and they fed him on sips of brackish water at Kurhauses in Europe.

Never be a quitter, plug right on! Emmet Payne wrapped himself up in his best suit, thinking thoughts of deepest brown.

"Flashing copybook maxims on a guy that hasn't got the price is a cinch anyhow and that earthquake gag gives me the pip. Social butterfly in New York on four cents. Oh, piffle!"

In just three-quarters of an hour Miriam would be on the job waiting for him. She was the only punctual girl in Manhattan, that left fifty-six other ways in which Miriam licked creation.

As fast as his burning thoughts would let him he finished dressing and made his way to the rendezvous on foot. He waited at the bottom of the Bridge stairs, the ones on the east of Park Row, where it seems as if all North America tries to climb up at once at the rush hour.

After buying an evening paper to look up the theatre list there were just three pennies left to jingle in his pocket, and the dope on the shows was seductive.

"With two premières to-night, one of them at the Opera where the great event, the heralded production of 'Bella Donna' is scheduled to take place, while at La Scala the long-expected 'Whispering Maids' makes its debut, Father Knickerbocker is at last coming into his own along the Rialto." So rhapsodized the dramatic critic of the *Star*.

The Rialto! Gee, New York's a peach of a place when a fellow's busted. Emmet Payne crumpled the paper up in disgust and just at that moment SHE came. He didn't have time to think or the nerve to explain how matters stood. He just linked his arm in hers, and before he realized it they were being swept slowly down the subway steps with the crowd.

Never be a quitter, plug right on! Well, here he was.

Round the ticket booths the crowd shoved and jostled. Miriam released his arm and sauntered on to the barrier. Payne glanced towards one of the booths. A portly gentleman with a very

red face was tying up the traffic of the city by offering a ten-dollar bill in payment for five tickets.

Nine seventy-five. The heap of bills and coin was dumped before him and the ticket-seller drummed nervously with his fingers as the waiting queue grew longer. But the stout party was not to be hurried, he counted the small change over twice and slipped it in his pocket, then went to work methodically on the pile of crumpled bills, the long blue ribbon of tickets sticking out between his fingers as he worked. Back of him the crowd grew fretful.

Deftly Payne closed in on the other side. The man behind the barrier gave another despairing look down the growing waiting line and just at that instant, with a rapid movement, Payne dexterously tore off two tickets from the row protruding from the portly one's fingers and walked swiftly, but without the least trace of confusion, to where Miriam stood waiting for him at the chopper. An uptown express was at the platform, and almost before the first shout escaped the victim, Payne had popped the tickets in the box, and Miriam and he were half way downstairs and lost to view behind a railing.

So quietly had the thing been done that no one but the possessor of the exaggerated waistband had observed the theft when the latter grabbed up his uncounted bills and started in pursuit with a yell. Unfortunately for him he forgot the ticket-chopper in his haste. He was brought to a halt rudely.

"Ticket there! Where's yer ticket?"

"Oh, confound the ticket, sir. That young fellow — running downstairs there — that one with the girl — Hi, stop thief, stop thief!"

Alas for the growth of cynicism and the decay of confidence in our fellow man in the twentieth century. You couldn't get past a single gateman in the city of New York with a yarn like that.

The man in uniform hardly bothered to glance in the direction of the stairs. He actually yawned in the fat man's face as he remarked, "don't know anything about no thieves. You can't come by here without a ticket."

The stout gentleman turned purple. For a moment it looked

as if he were going to rush the gateman to reach his prey, although by this time Payne and the girl were already started on their way uptown.

"That young man you let by here stole the tickets right out of my hand," he screamed. "How dare you stop me!"

The trainman looked up with the level glance of disbelief. He didn't even bother to get mad.

"Tell your troubles to the police," he said, coldly. "You get by here when you drop a ticket in that box."

Before the colloquy ended Miriam and her escort were half way to Times Square, and under the fire of small talk Emmet's mind was busy figuring where the price of dinner, the show, and supper was to come from. It was nearly half past six as they came out on Broadway.

"We'll have to get our seats before dinner," he told Miriam, "otherwise we're liable to get stuck."

"Where we going, Em? Had such a lot to tell you I never thought about it."

"There's a new thing on at La Scala," said Payne. "Suppose we take a fling at a first-night."

The big negro porter of La Scala swung the lobby door open and they sauntered in, Miriam immediately becoming absorbed in the display of photographs of the coming production while Payne marched briskly up to the box office.

"Maybe you can help me get word to the *Star's* dramatic editor?" he confided to the man at the window.

"Get word to him? Why don't you go round to his office?"

"Been there, gone for the day," Payne replied, briefly. "I've got to reach him to-night. Thought I'd leave a note here at the box office; he'd get it on his way in."

"Yes, of course you could do that, if he hasn't called for his tickets already. Let's see," he pulled out a drawer, glanced along his file and slammed it shut again. "Nothing doing, son."

"What's wrong?"

"Not coming here to-night. Dramatic editor — that's Harry Wertheim isn't it?"

"Yep," assented Payne, glibly. It was news to him, the

very news he wanted, but it wasn't necessary for anybody else to know that.

"They're sending some one else to-night, new man."

An idea struck the clerk.

"Say, he's bound to be over at the opera. They've got that new thing over there. You could get him there for sure."

"Gee, that's fine," said Payne, and he meant it. "I'll go right along."

He went back to Miriam and they started away.

"No good at all," he assured her. "They haven't a seat in the house you'd want to be seen in. Look here, Miriam, what's the matter with having a try at grand opera?"

"Grand opera! Land sakes, Em, you're hitting the high spots to-night."

"It's all in a lifetime and I'm feeling bully anyway. Are you on?"

"Am I on? Surest thing you know."

They worked their way up Broadway toward the opera house. The street was brilliant with the throng of folk, all in their various ways bent on an evening's pleasure, most of them well dressed and bearing the stamp of votaries of mirth and ease. The thought came to Payne how many really had the price.

"So Wertheim — Harry Wertheim's his name," he mused to himself. "Well, I got that bit of news easy."

They came to a small but busy store and Payne halted. In the window stood an operator bending over one of those gleaming little machines with nickel-plated flywheels that cards are printed on. Overhead a flaring sign invited all the world to have their visiting-cards turned out.

ABSOLUTELY WHILE YOU WAIT 100 for only 39c.

"That reminds me," said Emmet, "I should have had some cards printed to-day. It won't take a minute."

With great solicitude he got her a seat in a far corner of the store and a paper to look at before he went over to the counter to give his order.

"I want a thousand printed up," he explained glibly. "I'll

have the auditing department send you down a requisition for them in the morning. Just run me out half a dozen right now to take along."

He filled up a blank and handed it over the desk and the man with the glittering machine got a move on. In a few minutes the first of the cards began to come off and the operator laid a little pile on the counter. The inscription on them was as follows:

MR. HARRY WERTHEIM
The New York Star

As they touched the counter Payne seized them eagerly and grabbed for Miriam. Before the proprietor could say a word even if he wanted to, she was being hustled out of the store by her escort.

"That's all right," he called back cheerily. "You run the rest of them out and I'll see they send you round that requisition." If they tried to protest or asked for payment he couldn't have heard, for he was off down the street heading for the opera-house.

"Maybe we'll have better luck here," volunteered Miriam as he left her standing and went forward to see after tickets. He pulled out one of the new visiting-cards and handed it through the window.

"Mr. Wertheim's tickets, please."

The clerk looked up suspiciously.

"What d'you want Wertheim's tickets for?" he asked.

Payne shrugged his shoulders in supreme indifference.

"Draw pictures on, I suppose."

"Why can't he come himself if he wants 'em?"

"Dunno." Payne's cheerfulness was undiminished.

"You don't expect me to hand 'em out to the first guy that happens along, do you?"

It was clear the clerk was vacillating between the risk of offending the critic and the risk of losing the tickets. Payne looked him squarely in the face.

"That's his funeral, and yours. I'm not losing any sleep over it. You do what you like, professor."

His air of utter unconcern was too much for the clerk and with a final grumble he handed the tickets over. After all, the clerk reflected, even if there was a mistake he would hear about it in time, and any one who tried to get into the house with them would be stopped. He comforted himself with this thought as he watched the retreating figures of Payne and his pretty partner with her great set of white furs she was so proud of — the uncle of subway fame had brought it back from abroad.

"Our luck's out, Miriam, plumb out. Morgan and Vanderbilt combined couldn't get seats on a night like this. Unless, unless — we might try a speculator. I thought I saw one or two hanging round."

At the corner of the block he approached one of the confraternity. His voice was low and Miriam thoughtfully stood back a little to leave him free to drive a bargain.

"What's a pair of seats downstairs worth to-night? Good ones, well up in front."

The man laughted sarcastically.

"Good seats downstairs! You couldn't get a seat on the floor, good or bad, not if you was to offer me Trinity Churchyard for it."

"That so?" Payne's manner indicated doubt and the speculator fired up.

"Why, sir, I couldn't let you have a seat in the fam'ly circle fer less'n seven dollars, not a cent less. I know right now where I could get thirty dollars apiece for every downstairs seat I could deliver to-night."

"You could, eh?" Payne felt in his pocket, fishing for the little envelope.

"Easy as fallin' off a log. Thirty dollars apiece."

Payne's hand came out of his pocket and his voice dropped.

"See, here. Here's two in the third row middle. You can get thirty dollars apiece for 'em, can you? I'll let you have the two for thirty. Right in the middle of the third row. Can you beat it?"

The astonished speculator made a grab for the tickets and glanced at the numbers.

"True as ye live," he ejaculated. Then the instinct for a

bargain rose up in him. "Still, it's pretty late in the evening. If you'd come a little earlier now — Give yuh twenny-fi'."

"Done," said Payne, promptly. "Hand 'em over."

A moment later Miriam and he were arm in arm again, she inquiring, he exultant, and in his pocket his hand closed affectionately over "the price."

"No luck at all, Miriam. He hadn't a thing for to-night at any figure I could touch. Let's give it up and go to the Belasco. I know we can get in there."

He did his best to give the right shade of disappointment to his voice, but the result didn't please him much. What did he care now? Ten minutes later, with tickets for the Belasco in his pocket, they were at dinner.

Everything was perfectly lovely. Miriam was just swell, the dinner without a fault, and the show — well, he never knew what the show was about. All he remembered was a squeeze from Miriam's little hand under the cover of the big white muff, and a look in her eyes that said things — things he was burning to hear. For the life of him he couldn't say whether the curtain even went up. Last and best of all, climax of a splendid evening, came the supper.

She was sure at her loveliest — intoxicating, a bewitching, maddening vision, seeming to dance before his eyes. Afterwards he faintly recalled that they had wine and how he shooed the waiter off, how he had pledged her eyes, her lips, her hair, the color of her cheeks. Her hair seemed to take fresh depths of gold and bronze as he told her about it, her lips had pouted back at him as only hers could, and her eyes — her eyes seemed to grow big and soft and tender as he talked. He wanted to get outside where it was cool and they could be off by themselves somewhere, somewhere dark, but it was no use, he couldn't wait.

Right there over the supper table, with the tobacco smoke forming little hazy blue layers in the air around them, he threw the big question at her. All his hopes, all his fears, all his ambitions, he summed up, and she, her own adorable self, was at the heart of them all. Would she, could she — she might — she must, she simply must. Life wouldn't be tolerable if she didn't say yes.